

Mona Hanna-Attisha, Doctor and Activist



[The world] should be full of people raising their voices, using their power and presence, standing up for what's right.

1 Being an activist started early for Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha. She was only 14 years old when she decided to take a stand and make her community better. A nearby neighborhood had an incinerator. An incinerator is a place where waste is burned at high temperatures until it turns into ash. This incinerator was located near a school and senior center. The pollution from the incinerator was causing breathing problems for the people in the area. Mona, along with other community activists, had the incinerator shut down.

2 A desire to continue impacting communities led Mona to learn about environmental health. Mona went to the University of Michigan and earned an undergraduate degree in Environmental Health. She then earned a Master of Public Health. Then Mona went to Michigan State and earned her Medical Degree.

3 Mona became a pediatrician, or children's doctor in Flint, Michigan. She spent her days taking care of patients and answering parents' questions.

4 In 2014, more and more parents of her patients were asking the same question--*Is the water in Flint safe to drink?* They were worried about how it looked. It was brown and orange when it came out of the faucet, and there were particles in the water. Mona knew that Flint had changed its water source from Lake Michigan to the Flint River in order to save money. She knew that the Flint River was not as clean as Lake Michigan, so she decided to do some research.

5 First she looked at the blood test results of her patients in both 2014 and 2015. The results shocked her. There was a

50% increase of lead levels in the blood samples from 2014 to 2015. More research was done and Mona realized the water in Flint was not safe.

6 Normally, research needs to be peer-reviewed by other doctors and scientists. This is done to make sure that the research is correct. But Mona didn't feel like she had time to wait. She knew that the high levels of lead in children would lead to many health issues, so she held a press conference to share her findings. Many people were upset. They tried to say she was wrong, but Mona did not give up. She knew she was right. Mona went to Washington, D.C. and shared her findings with the United States Congress three times. The government listened to Mona and began helping the city of Flint.

7 In 2018, Mona wrote a book about the water crisis in Flint. It is called *What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis Resistance, and Hope in an American City*.

8 Today Dr. Hanna-Attisha continues to help her community of Flint. She is the founder of two different organizations. Both *The Pediatric Public Health Initiative* and *The Flint Child Health And Development Fund* work to help children who have high levels of lead in their blood from drinking the water in Flint.

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Name: _____

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1. How do you know that Mona Hanna-Attisha believes in the following statement?

“The world should be full of people raising their voices using their voices, using their power and presence, standing up for what’s right.”

2. What caused the people of Flint to ask about the safety of the water coming out of their taps?

3. In 1-3 sentences, summarize how Mona Hanna-Attisha has continued to help with the Flint water crisis.

4. Why didn't Mona Hanna-Attisha have her research peer-reviewed ?
